

Assembly Bill No. 2210

CHAPTER 609

An act to amend Sections 21100, 22651.7, 22658, 22953, and 40000.15 of, and to repeal Section 22658.2 of, the Vehicle Code, relating to vehicles.

[Approved by Governor September 29, 2006. Filed with
Secretary of State September 29, 2006.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 2210, Goldberg. Tow trucks: regulating.

(1) Existing statutory law authorizes a city or county to adopt rules and regulations by ordinance or resolution regarding, among other things, licensing and regulating the operation of tow truck service or tow truck drivers whose principal place of business or employment is within the jurisdiction of that local authority, except as specified.

This bill would express certain legislative findings regarding the safety and welfare of the general public as being promoted in allowing local authorities to license and regulate tow truck service companies and their operators.

(2) Existing law requires a towing company to remove a vehicle parked on private property to the nearest public garage under specific circumstances if, among other things, the property owner or lessee's prior written authorization is obtained and imposes certain duties on the property owner or lessee, the tow truck company, and the storage facilities and their operators. Under existing law, civil causes of action are established for violating these provisions and it is an infraction, under the Vehicle Code, for a person to violate, or fail to comply with the Vehicle Code or a local ordinance adopted pursuant to the Vehicle Code.

This bill would substantially recast these provisions by requiring, among other things, that the property owner or lessee include the name and telephone number of each towing company that is a party to a written general towing authorization with that person, that the described written authorization from the property owner or the lessee contain certain specific information, and that the tow truck operator, notify the registered and legal owner of the fact of the removal of a vehicle, the grounds for the removal, and the place where the vehicle has been removed, under specified conditions. The bill would also require the towing company to provide a photocopy, as specified, of the written authorization to the vehicle owner or an agent of that owner, when that person claims the vehicle and prior to payment, would prohibit a towing company from removing or commencing the removal of a vehicle from certain private property unless the towing company has made a good faith inquiry to determine that the

owner or the property owner's agent complied with certain statutory restrictions regarding the removal of a vehicle from certain private property. The bill would require a towing company to maintain certain records. The bill would make a violation of these provisions, an infraction or a misdemeanor, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program by creating new crimes, and subject to civil actions.

The bill would require, upon a vehicle owner's request, a towing company or its driver to immediately and unconditionally release a vehicle that is not yet removed from private property and in transit. The bill would make it a misdemeanor to violate this requirement and to knowingly charge a vehicle owner a towing, service, or charge that exceeds statutorily imposed rates, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program by creating new crimes.

This bill would require a towing operator to make available for inspection and copying, his or her rate approved by the California Highway Patrol within 24 hours of a request to specified entities. The bill would make it a misdemeanor to violate this requirement, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program by creating new crimes.

The bill would require an owner or the owner's authorized agent of a vehicle that has been released, as described above, to immediately move that vehicle to a lawful location. Because the failure to comply with this requirement would be a crime, this bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

This bill would require a person operating or in charge of a storage facility to conspicuously display in that portion of the office where business is conducted with the public a notice advising that all valid credit cards, as defined, and cash are acceptable means of payment.

The bill would make the failure to comply with these display requirements or to fail to accept valid credit card or cash payments a misdemeanor, thereby, imposing a state-mandated local program by creating new crimes.

This bill would require a towing company that removes a vehicle from private property to notify the local law enforcement agency of the tow after the vehicle is removed from the private property and is in transit. The bill would subject the towing company to civil liability to the registered owner of the vehicle, or his or her agent, if the towing company fails to notify the local law enforcement agency within 30 minutes of the removal. The bill would provide that a towing company is guilty of a misdemeanor if the towing company fails to notify the local law enforcement agency within 60 minutes after that removal or 15 minutes after the towed vehicle arrives at a storage facility, whichever is less, thereby imposing a state-mandated local program by creating a new crime. The bill would provide a towing company with an affirmative defense if the required notification is impracticable, in which case the time for notification is tolled for the period in which the notification is impracticable.

The bill would express the intent of the Legislature regarding vehicle possession and promoting the safety of the general public, and would

specify that the remedies, sanctions, restrictions, and procedures provided in these provisions are not exclusive and are in addition to other remedies, sanctions, restrictions, or procedures that may be provided in other provisions of law.

This bill would require that a vehicle removed from private property be stored in a storage facility that meets specified requirements. Because the failure to comply with these requirements would be a crime, the bill would impose a state-mandated local program.

(3) Existing law authorizes a peace officer, as defined, or a regularly employed and salaried employee who is engaged in directing traffic or enforcing parking laws and regulations of the jurisdiction in which a vehicle is located, to immobilize the vehicle that is located on a highway or public lands located within the territorial limits in which the officer or employee may act, if the vehicle is found upon a highway or the public lands and certain factors are known to exist regarding the vehicle or the registered owner.

This bill would expressly provide that the above-described authorization does not authorize a person, other than a person expressly authorized above, to immobilize a vehicle.

(4) Existing law limits a towing company to imposing a charge of not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ of the regular towing charge for the towing of a vehicle at the request of the owner of private property or that owner's agent if the owner of the vehicle or the vehicle owner's agent returns to the vehicle before it is removed from the private property.

This bill would recast that provision to limit a towing company to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the regular towing charge of a vehicle that is towed at the request of the owner, the owner's agent, or the person in lawful possession of the private property if the owner of the vehicle or the vehicle owner's agent returns to the vehicle after the vehicle is coupled to the tow truck, as specified, or is lifted off the ground by means of conventional trailer, and before it is removed from the private property.

(5) Existing law prohibits an owner or person in lawful possession of private property that is held open to the public, or a discernible portion thereof, for parking of vehicles at no fee, from towing or removing, or causing the towing or removal, of a vehicle within one hour of the vehicle being parked, except as excluded.

This bill would exclude from this prohibition a vehicle that is parked in a manner that interferes with an entrance to, or exit from, the private property.

This bill would also express legislative intent regarding promoting the safety of the general public, and would allow for a civil cause of action upon a violation of the above prohibition.

(6) The California Constitution requires the state to reimburse local agencies and school districts for certain costs mandated by the state. Statutory provisions establish procedures for making that reimbursement.

This bill would provide that no reimbursement is required by this act for a specified reason.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

SECTION 1. Section 21100 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

21100. Local authorities may adopt rules and regulations by ordinance or resolution regarding the following matters:

(a) Regulating or prohibiting processions or assemblages on the highways.

(b) Licensing and regulating the operation of vehicles for hire and drivers of passenger vehicles for hire.

(c) Regulating traffic by means of traffic officers.

(d) Regulating traffic by means of official traffic control devices meeting the requirements of Section 21400.

(e) Regulating traffic by means of a person given temporary or permanent appointment for that duty by the local authority whenever official traffic control devices are disabled or otherwise inoperable, at the scenes of accidents or disasters, or at locations as may require traffic direction for orderly traffic flow.

A person shall not be appointed pursuant to this subdivision unless and until the local authority has submitted to the commissioner or to the chief law enforcement officer exercising jurisdiction in the enforcement of traffic laws within the area in which the person is to perform the duty, for review, a proposed program of instruction for the training of a person for that duty, and unless and until the commissioner or other chief law enforcement officer approves the proposed program. The commissioner or other chief law enforcement officer shall approve a proposed program if he or she reasonably determines that the program will provide sufficient training for persons assigned to perform the duty described in this subdivision.

(f) Regulating traffic at the site of road or street construction or maintenance by persons authorized for that duty by the local authority.

(g) (1) Licensing and regulating the operation of tow truck service or tow truck drivers whose principal place of business or employment is within the jurisdiction of the local authority, excepting the operation and operators of any auto dismantlers' tow vehicle licensed under Section 11505 or any tow truck operated by a repossessing agency licensed under Chapter 11 (commencing with Section 7500) of Division 3 of the Business and Professions Code and its registered employees.

(2) The Legislature finds that the safety and welfare of the general public is promoted by permitting local authorities to regulate tow truck service companies and operators by requiring licensure, insurance, and proper training in the safe operation of towing equipment, thereby ensuring against towing mistakes that may lead to violent confrontation, stranding motorists in dangerous situations, impeding the expedited vehicle recovery, and wasting state and local law enforcement's limited resources.

(3) Nothing in this subdivision shall limit the authority of a city or city and county pursuant to Section 12111.

(h) Operation of bicycles, and, as specified in Section 21114.5, electric carts by physically disabled persons, or persons 50 years of age or older, on the public sidewalks.

(i) Providing for the appointment of nonstudent school crossing guards for the protection of persons who are crossing a street or highway in the vicinity of a school or while returning thereafter to a place of safety.

(j) Regulating the methods of deposit of garbage and refuse in streets and highways for collection by the local authority or by any person authorized by the local authority.

(k) (1) Regulating cruising.

(2) The ordinance or resolution adopted pursuant to this subdivision shall regulate cruising, which is the repetitive driving of a motor vehicle past a traffic control point in traffic that is congested at or near the traffic control point, as determined by the ranking peace officer on duty within the affected area, within a specified time period and after the vehicle operator has been given an adequate written notice that further driving past the control point will be a violation of the ordinance or resolution.

(3) A person is not in violation of an ordinance or resolution adopted pursuant to this subdivision unless both of the following apply:

(A) That person has been given the written notice on a previous driving trip past the control point and then again passes the control point in that same time interval.

(B) The beginning and end of the portion of the street subject to cruising controls are clearly identified by signs that briefly and clearly state the appropriate provisions of this subdivision and the local ordinance or resolution on cruising.

(l) Regulating or authorizing the removal by peace officers of vehicles unlawfully parked in a fire lane, as described in Section 22500.1, on private property. A removal pursuant to this subdivision shall be consistent, to the extent possible, with the procedures for removal and storage set forth in Chapter 10 (commencing with Section 22650).

SEC. 2. Section 22651.7 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

22651.7. (a) In addition to, or as an alternative to, removal, a peace officer, as defined in Chapter 4.5 (commencing with Section 830) of Title 3 of Part 2 of the Penal Code, or a regularly employed and salaried employee who is engaged in directing traffic or enforcing parking laws and regulations, of a jurisdiction in which a vehicle is located may immobilize the vehicle with a device designed and manufactured for the immobilization of vehicles, on a highway or any public lands located within the territorial limits in which the officer or employee may act if the vehicle is found upon a highway or public lands and it is known to have been issued five or more notices of parking violations that are delinquent because the owner or person in control of the vehicle has not responded to the agency responsible for processing notices of parking violation within 21 calendar days of notice of citation issuance or citation issuance or 14 calendar days of the mailing of a notice of delinquent parking violation, or the registered owner of the vehicle is known to have been issued five or

more notices for failure to pay or failure to appear in court for traffic violations for which no certificate has been issued by the magistrate or clerk of the court hearing the case showing that the case has been adjudicated or concerning which the registered owner's record has not been cleared pursuant to Chapter 6 (commencing with Section 41500) of Division 17. The vehicle may be immobilized until that person furnishes to the immobilizing law enforcement agency all of the following:

- (1) Evidence of his or her identity.
- (2) An address within this state at which he or she can be located.
- (3) Satisfactory evidence that the full amount of parking penalties has been deposited for all notices of parking violation issued for the vehicle and any other vehicle registered to the registered owner of the immobilized vehicle and that bail has been deposited for all traffic violations of the registered owner that have not been cleared. The requirements in this paragraph shall be fully enforced by the immobilizing law enforcement agency on and after the time that the Department of Motor Vehicles is able to provide access to the necessary records. A notice of parking violation issued to the vehicle shall be accompanied by a warning that repeated violations may result in the impounding or immobilization of the vehicle. In lieu of furnishing satisfactory evidence that the full amount of parking penalties or bail, or both, have been deposited that person may demand to be taken without unnecessary delay before a magistrate, for traffic offenses, or a hearing examiner, for parking offenses, within the county in which the offenses charged are alleged to have been committed and who has jurisdiction of the offenses and is nearest or most accessible with reference to the place where the vehicle is immobilized. Evidence of current registration shall be produced after a vehicle has been immobilized or, at the discretion of the immobilizing law enforcement agency, a notice to appear for violation of subdivision (a) of Section 4000 shall be issued to that person.

(b) A person, other than a person authorized under subdivision (a), shall not immobilize a vehicle.

SEC. 3. Section 22658 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

22658. (a) The owner or person in lawful possession of private property, including an association of a common interest development as defined in Section 1351 of the Civil Code, may cause the removal of a vehicle parked on the property to a storage facility that meets the requirements of subdivision (n) under any of the following circumstances:

- (1) There is displayed, in plain view at all entrances to the property, a sign not less than 17 inches by 22 inches in size, with lettering not less than one inch in height, prohibiting public parking and indicating that vehicles will be removed at the owner's expense, and containing the telephone number of the local traffic law enforcement agency and the name and telephone number of each towing company that is a party to a written general towing authorization agreement with the owner or person in lawful possession of the property. The sign may also indicate that a citation may also be issued for the violation.

(2) The vehicle has been issued a notice of parking violation, and 96 hours have elapsed since the issuance of that notice.

(3) The vehicle is on private property and lacks an engine, transmission, wheels, tires, doors, windshield, or any other major part or equipment necessary to operate safely on the highways, the owner or person in lawful possession of the private property has notified the local traffic law enforcement agency, and 24 hours have elapsed since that notification.

(4) The lot or parcel upon which the vehicle is parked is improved with a single-family dwelling.

(b) The tow truck operator removing the vehicle, if the operator knows or is able to ascertain from the property owner, person in lawful possession of the property, or the registration records of the Department of Motor Vehicles the name and address of the registered and legal owner of the vehicle, shall immediately give, or cause to be given, notice in writing to the registered and legal owner of the fact of the removal, the grounds for the removal, and indicate the place to which the vehicle has been removed. If the vehicle is stored in a storage facility, a copy of the notice shall be given to the proprietor of the storage facility. The notice provided for in this section shall include the amount of mileage on the vehicle at the time of removal and the time of the removal from the property. If the tow truck operator does not know and is not able to ascertain the name of the owner or for any other reason is unable to give the notice to the owner as provided in this section, the tow truck operator shall comply with the requirements of subdivision (c) of Section 22853 relating to notice in the same manner as applicable to an officer removing a vehicle from private property.

(c) This section does not limit or affect any right or remedy that the owner or person in lawful possession of private property may have by virtue of other provisions of law authorizing the removal of a vehicle parked upon private property.

(d) The owner of a vehicle removed from private property pursuant to subdivision (a) may recover for any damage to the vehicle resulting from any intentional or negligent act of a person causing the removal of, or removing, the vehicle.

(e) (1) An owner or person in lawful possession of private property, or an association of a common interest development, causing the removal of a vehicle parked on that property is liable for double the storage or towing charges whenever there has been a failure to comply with paragraph (1), (2), or (3) of subdivision (a) or to state the grounds for the removal of the vehicle if requested by the legal or registered owner of the vehicle as required by subdivision (f).

(2) A property owner or owner's agent or lessee who causes the removal of a vehicle parked on that property pursuant to the exemption set forth in subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (l) and fails to comply with that subdivision is guilty of an infraction, punishable by a fine of one thousand dollars (\$1,000).

(f) An owner or person in lawful possession of private property, or an association of a common interest development, causing the removal of a vehicle parked on that property shall notify by telephone or, if impractical, by the most expeditious means available, the local traffic law enforcement agency within one hour after authorizing the tow. An owner or person in lawful possession of private property, an association of a common interest development, causing the removal of a vehicle parked on that property, or the tow truck operator who removes the vehicle, shall state the grounds for the removal of the vehicle if requested by the legal or registered owner of that vehicle. A towing company that removes a vehicle from private property in compliance with subdivision (I) is not responsible in a situation relating to the validity of the removal. A towing company that removes the vehicle under this section shall be responsible for the following:

(1) Damage to the vehicle in the transit and subsequent storage of the vehicle.

(2) The removal of a vehicle other than the vehicle specified by the owner or other person in lawful possession of the private property.

(g) (1) (A) Possession of a vehicle under this section shall be deemed to arise when a vehicle is removed from private property and is in transit.

(B) Upon the request of the owner of the vehicle or that owner's agent, the towing company or its driver shall immediately and unconditionally release a vehicle that is not yet removed from the private property and in transit.

(C) A person failing to comply with subparagraph (B) is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(2) If a vehicle is released to a person in compliance with subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1), the vehicle owner or authorized agent shall immediately move that vehicle to a lawful location.

(h) A towing company may impose a charge of not more than one-half of the regular towing charge for the towing of a vehicle at the request of the owner, the owner's agent, or the person in lawful possession of the private property pursuant to this section if the owner of the vehicle or the vehicle owner's agent returns to the vehicle after the vehicle is coupled to the tow truck by means of a regular hitch, coupling device, drawbar, portable dolly, or is lifted off the ground by means of a conventional trailer, and before it is removed from the private property. The regular towing charge may only be imposed after the vehicle has been removed from the property and is in transit.

(i) (1) (A) A charge for towing or storage, or both, of a vehicle under this section is excessive if the charge exceeds the greater of the following:

(i) That which would have been charged for that towing or storage, or both, made at the request of a law enforcement agency under an agreement between a towing company and the law enforcement agency that exercises primary jurisdiction in the city in which is located the private property from which the vehicle was, or was attempted to be, removed, or if the private property is not located within a city, then the law enforcement

agency that exercises primary jurisdiction in the county in which the private property is located.

(ii) That which would have been charged for that towing or storage, or both, under the rate approved for that towing operator by the California Highway Patrol for the jurisdiction in which the private property is located and from which the vehicle was, or was attempted to be, removed.

(B) A towing operator shall make available for inspection and copying his or her rate approved by the California Highway Patrol, if any, with in 24 hours of a request without a warrant to law enforcement, the Attorney General, district attorney, or city attorney.

(2) If a vehicle is released within 24 hours from the time the vehicle is brought into the storage facility, regardless of the calendar date, the storage charge shall be for only one day. Not more than one day's storage charge may be required for a vehicle released the same day that it is stored.

(3) If a request to release a vehicle is made and the appropriate fees are tendered and documentation establishing that the person requesting release is entitled to possession of the vehicle, or is the owner's insurance representative, is presented within the initial 24 hours of storage, and the storage facility fails to comply with the request to release the vehicle or is not open for business during normal business hours, then only one day's storage charge may be required to be paid until after the first business day. A business day is any day in which the lienholder is open for business to the public for at least eight hours. If a request is made more than 24 hours after the vehicle is placed in storage, charges may be imposed on a full calendar day basis for each day, or part thereof, that the vehicle is in storage.

(j) (1) A person who charges a vehicle owner a towing, service, or storage charge at an excessive rate, as described in subdivision (h) or (i), is civilly liable to the vehicle owner for four times the amount charged.

(2) A person who knowingly charges a vehicle owner a towing, service, or storage charge at an excessive rate, as described in subdivision (h) or (i), or who fails to make available his or her rate as required in subparagraph (B) of paragraph (1) of subdivision (i), is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not more than two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500), or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than three months, or by both that fine and imprisonment.

(k) (1) A person operating or in charge of a storage facility where vehicles are stored pursuant to this section shall accept a valid credit card or cash for payment of towing and storage by a registered owner or the owner's agent claiming the vehicle. "Credit card" means "credit card" as defined in subdivision (a) of Section 1747.02 of the Civil Code, except for the purposes of this section, credit card does not include a credit card issued by a retail seller.

(2) A person described in paragraph (1) shall conspicuously display, in that portion of the storage facility office where business is conducted with the public, a notice advising that all valid credit cards and cash are acceptable means of payment.

(3) A person operating or in charge of a storage facility who refuses to accept a valid credit card or who fails to post the required notice under paragraph (2) is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not more than two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500), or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than three months, or by both that fine and imprisonment.

(4) A person described in paragraph (1) who violates paragraph (1) or (2) is civilly liable to the registered owner of the vehicle or the person who tendered the fees for four times the amount of the towing and storage charges.

(5) A person operating or in charge of the storage facility shall have sufficient moneys on the premises of the primary storage facility during normal business hours to accommodate, and make change in, a reasonable monetary transaction.

(6) Credit charges for towing and storage services shall comply with Section 1748.1 of the Civil Code. Law enforcement agencies may include the costs of providing for payment by credit when making agreements with towing companies as described in subdivision (i).

(l) (1) (A) A towing company shall not remove or commence the removal of a vehicle from private property without first obtaining the written authorization from the property owner or lessee, including an association of a common interest development, or an employee or agent thereof, who shall be present at the time of removal and verify the alleged violation, except that presence and verification is not required if the person authorizing the tow is the property owner, or the owner's agent who is not a tow operator, of a residential rental property of 15 or fewer units that does not have an onsite owner, owner's agent or employee, and the tenant has verified the violation, requested the tow from that tenant's assigned parking space, and provided a signed request or electronic mail, or has called and provides a signed request or electronic mail within 24 hours, to the property owner or owner's agent, which the owner or agent shall provide to the towing company within 48 hours of authorizing the tow. The signed request or electronic mail shall contain the name and address of the tenant, and the date and time the tenant requested the tow. A towing company shall obtain within 48 hours of receiving the written authorization to tow a copy of a tenant request required pursuant to this subparagraph. For the purpose of this subparagraph, a person providing the written authorization who is required to be present on the private property at the time of the tow does not have to be physically present at the specified location of where the vehicle to be removed is located on the private property.

(B) The written authorization under subparagraph (A) shall include all of the following:

(i) The make, model, vehicle identification number, and license plate number of the removed vehicle.

(ii) The name, signature, job title, residential or business address and working telephone number of the person, described in subparagraph (A), authorizing the removal of the vehicle.

(iii) The grounds for the removal of the vehicle.

(iv) The time when the vehicle was first observed parked at the private property.

(v) The time that authorization to tow the vehicle was given.

(C) (i) When the vehicle owner or his or her agent claims the vehicle, the towing company prior to payment of a towing or storage charge shall provide a photocopy of the written authorization to the vehicle owner or the agent.

(ii) If the vehicle was towed from a residential property, the towing company shall redact the information specified in clause (ii) of subparagraph (B) in the photocopy of the written authorization provided to the vehicle owner or the agent pursuant to clause (i).

(iii) The towing company shall also provide to the vehicle owner or the agent a separate notice that provides the telephone number of the appropriate local law enforcement or prosecuting agency by stating “If you believe that you have been wrongfully towed, please contact the local law enforcement or prosecuting agency at [insert appropriate telephone number].” The notice shall be in English and in the most populous language, other than English, that is spoken in the jurisdiction.

(D) A towing company shall not remove or commence the removal of a vehicle from private property described in subdivision (a) of Section 22953 unless the towing company has made a good faith inquiry to determine that the owner or the property owner’s agent complied with Section 22953.

(E) (i) General authorization to remove or commence removal of a vehicle at the towing company’s discretion shall not be delegated to a towing company or its affiliates except in the case of a vehicle unlawfully parked within 15 feet of a fire hydrant or in a fire lane, or in a manner which interferes with an entrance to, or exit from, the private property.

(ii) In those cases in which general authorization is granted to a towing company or its affiliate to undertake the removal or commence the removal of a vehicle that is unlawfully parked within 15 feet of a fire hydrant or in a fire lane, or that interferes with an entrance to, or exit from, private property, the towing company and the property owner, or owner’s agent, or person in lawful possession of the private property shall have a written agreement granting that general authorization.

(2) If a towing company removes a vehicle under a general authorization described in subparagraph (E) of paragraph (1) and that vehicle is unlawfully parked within 15 feet of a fire hydrant or in a fire lane, or in a manner that interferes with an entrance to, or exit from, the private property, the towing company shall take, prior to the removal of that vehicle, a photograph of the vehicle that clearly indicates that parking violation. Prior to accepting payment, the towing company shall keep one copy of the photograph taken pursuant to this paragraph, and shall present

that photograph and provide, without charge, a photocopy to the owner or an agent of the owner, when that person claims the vehicle.

(3) A towing company shall maintain the original written authorization, or the general authorization described in subparagraph (E) of paragraph (1) and the photograph of the violation, required pursuant to this section, and any written requests from a tenant to the property owner or owner's agent required by subparagraph (A) of paragraph (1), for a period of three years and shall make them available for inspection and copying within 24 hours of a request without a warrant to law enforcement, the Attorney General, district attorney, or city attorney.

(4) A person who violates this subdivision is guilty of a misdemeanor, punishable by a fine of not more than two thousand five hundred dollars (\$2,500), or by imprisonment in the county jail for not more than three months, or by both that fine and imprisonment.

(5) A person who violates this subdivision is civilly liable to the owner of the vehicle or his or her agent for four times the amount of the towing and storage charges.

(m) (1) A towing company that removes a vehicle from private property under this section shall notify the local law enforcement agency of that tow after the vehicle is removed from the private property and is in transit.

(2) A towing company is guilty of a misdemeanor if the towing company fails to provide the notification required under paragraph (1) within 60 minutes after the vehicle is removed from the private property and is in transit or 15 minutes after arriving at the storage facility, whichever time is less.

(3) A towing company that does not provide the notification under paragraph (1) within 30 minutes after the vehicle is removed from the private property and is in transit is civilly liable to the registered owner of the vehicle, or the person who tenders the fees, for three times the amount of the towing and storage charges.

(4) If notification is impracticable, the times for notification, as required pursuant to paragraphs (2) and (3), shall be tolled for the time period that notification is impracticable. This paragraph is an affirmative defense.

(n) A vehicle removed from private property pursuant to this section shall be stored in a facility that meets all of the following requirements:

(1) (A) Is located within a 10-mile radius of the property from where the vehicle was removed.

(B) The 10-mile radius requirement of subparagraph (A) does not apply if a towing company has prior general written approval from the law enforcement agency that exercises primary jurisdiction in the city in which is located the private property from which the vehicle was removed, or if the private property is not located within a city, then the law enforcement agency that exercises primary jurisdiction in the county in which is located the private property.

(2) (A) Remains open during normal business hours and releases vehicles after normal business hours.

(B) A gate fee may be charged for releasing a vehicle after normal business hours, weekends, and state holidays. However, the maximum hourly charge for releasing a vehicle after normal business hours shall be one-half of the hourly tow rate charged for initially towing the vehicle, or less.

(C) Notwithstanding any other provision of law and for purposes of this paragraph, “normal business hours” are Monday to Friday, inclusive, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., inclusive, except state holidays.

(3) Has a public pay telephone in the office area that is open and accessible to the public.

(o) (1) It is the intent of the Legislature in the adoption of subdivision (k) to assist vehicle owners or their agents by, among other things, allowing payment by credit cards for towing and storage services, thereby expediting the recovery of towed vehicles and concurrently promoting the safety and welfare of the public.

(2) It is the intent of the Legislature in the adoption of subdivision (l) to further the safety of the general public by ensuring that a private property owner or lessee has provided his or her authorization for the removal of a vehicle from his or her property, thereby promoting the safety of those persons involved in ordering the removal of the vehicle as well as those persons removing, towing, and storing the vehicle.

(3) It is the intent of the Legislature in the adoption of subdivision (g) to promote the safety of the general public by requiring towing companies to unconditionally release a vehicle that is not lawfully in their possession, thereby avoiding the likelihood of dangerous and violent confrontation and physical injury to vehicle owners and towing operators, the stranding of vehicle owners and their passengers at a dangerous time and location, and impeding expedited vehicle recovery, without wasting law enforcement’s limited resources.

(p) The remedies, sanctions, restrictions, and procedures provided in this section are not exclusive and are in addition to other remedies, sanctions, restrictions, or procedures that may be provided in other provisions of law, including, but not limited to, those that are provided in Sections 12110 and 34660.

SEC. 4. Section 22658.2 of the Vehicle Code is repealed.

SEC. 5. Section 22953 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

22953. (a) An owner or person in lawful possession of private property that is held open to the public, or a discernible portion thereof, for parking of vehicles at no fee, or an employee or agent thereof, shall not tow or remove, or cause the towing or removal, of a vehicle within one hour of the vehicle being parked.

(b) Notwithstanding subdivision (a), a vehicle may be removed immediately after being illegally parked within 15 feet of a fire hydrant, in a fire lane, in a manner that interferes with an entrance to, or an exit from,

the private property, or in a parking space or stall legally designated for disabled persons.

(c) Subdivision (a) does not apply to property designated for parking at residential property, or to property designated for parking at a hotel or motel where the parking stalls or spaces are clearly marked for a specific room.

(d) It is the intent of the Legislature in the adoption of subdivision (a) to avoid causing the unnecessary stranding of motorists and placing them in dangerous situations, when traffic citations and other civil remedies are available, thereby promoting the safety of the general public.

(e) A person who violates subdivision (a) is civilly liable to the owner of the vehicle or his or her agent for two times the amount of the towing and storage charges.

SEC. 6. Section 40000.15 of the Vehicle Code is amended to read:

40000.15. A violation of any of the following provisions shall constitute a misdemeanor, and not an infraction:

Subdivision (g), (j), (k), (l), or (m) of Section 22658, relating to unlawfully towed or stored vehicles.

Sections 23103 and 23104, relating to reckless driving.

Section 23109, relating to speed contests or exhibitions.

Subdivision (a) of Section 23110, relating to throwing at vehicles.

Section 23152, relating to driving under the influence.

Subdivision (b) of Section 23222, relating to possession of marijuana.

Subdivision (a) or (b) of Section 23224, relating to persons under 21 years of age knowingly driving, or being a passenger in, a motor vehicle carrying any alcoholic beverage.

Section 23253, relating to directions on toll highways or vehicular crossings.

Section 23332, relating to trespassing.

Section 24002.5, relating to unlawful operation of a farm vehicle.

Section 24011.3, relating to vehicle bumper strength notices.

Section 27150.1, relating to sale of exhaust systems.

Section 27362, relating to child passenger seat restraints.

Section 28050, relating to true mileage driven.

Section 28050.5, relating to nonfunctional odometers.

Section 28051, relating to resetting odometers.

Section 28051.5, relating to devices to reset odometers.

Subdivision (d) of Section 28150, relating to possessing four or more jamming devices.

SEC. 7. No reimbursement is required by this act pursuant to Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution because the only costs that may be incurred by a local agency or school district will be incurred because this act creates a new crime or infraction, eliminates a crime or infraction, or changes the penalty for a crime or infraction, within the meaning of Section 17556 of the Government Code, or changes the

definition of a crime within the meaning of Section 6 of Article XIII B of the California Constitution.

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